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January 11, 1964

### Comment: Bloc Military Aid to the Castro Regime

In less than a year the Soviet-Cuban bloc has supplied the Castro regime with large-scale military assistance. Bloc military deliveries, primarily from the USSR and Czechoslovakia, included a wide variety of land armaments ranging from small arms through heavy tanks. Bloc aircraft supplied to Cuba include MiG jet fighters, helicopters, transport planes, and trainers; jet bombers may also be provided. Extensive military training has been provided both in the bloc and in Cuba. Communist military aid has turned the Cuban military establishment into one of the most formidable in Latin America, and it may introduce a military capability hitherto lacking in the Caribbean area.

The Soviet Union at first more reluctantly in responding to Cuban requests for military assistance, probably out of deference to the priority of maintaining a climate for negotiations at the Paris summit. One reason may be, however, the Cuban military buildup demanded safety. The purpose has been to defend the Castro regime in suppressing the counter-revolutionary movement and to consolidating the control over the Cuban people while the task of penetrating the Latin American bloc for Communist operations in the rest of Latin America is completed.

To a considerable degree the bloc has committed its strength to the continuation of the present regime, and Soviet probably still continues to provide military equipment and training to help uphold this government. For the past several months the bloc's military aid program to Cuba has been concerned primarily with training, synthesizing new equipment, and consolidating the Cuban military establishment along bloc organizational lines. The deliveries of arms are probably now underway.

#### Background

The military attempts to penetrate Soviet bloc arms were initiated by the Cuban communists as early as 1959, but no firm military aid pact was concluded until the summer of 1960. The USSR's cool response to Cuban gestures for cooperation in the military field was largely the result of Soviet interest in over the future course of the Cuban revolution. The Soviet efforts to procure military equipment in the next decades largely differed through 1960 and early 1961, when purchasing turned toward frequent to the bloc to investigate new sources of supply. The western reports of a whole range of equipment from tanks, and the modern jet aircraft.

Following the visit of Khrushchev to Cuba in February 1961, when the USSR informed the Cuban leaders that they had been free of all anti-propaganda control and extensive economic and political support, they turned toward a major arms deal. The following October, following the initial consideration of the Cuban revolutionaries, the rest of Latin America, the Soviet Union pledged its greatest commitment to Castro and assured the Cuban revolutionaries that "Russia can assure you of its support in every battle, at every juncture, and the United States through its agents is waging in which case, Khrushchev's visit succeeded. The resulting arms massive bloc funds and a program which galvanized the Cuban revolutionaries to defend their country.

With the collapse of the East-West summit meeting to May 1960 and the sharp setbacks in Soviet relations with the United States, many of the former Soviet inhibitions about providing military aid to Cuba were removed and a vigorous drive was launched to associate the bloc state closely with the Castro regime. This drive reached a peak with Soviet attacks on the Monroe Doctrine and assurances of support in the event of US military action against Cuba. These assurances, including Khrushchev's ambiguous references to retaliation with missiles, were offered in general terms intended to cover the supply of military aid in the form of equipment and technical assistance, without compelling the USSR to specific moves in support of Cuba.

Military negotiations with the USSR and Czechoslovakia in 1960 were followed up by a full publication help by Prague and Moscow by Raoul Castro, which probably was the occasion for the conclusion of secret arms deals. By August, Czech small arms were being issued to some Cuban militia units, and in the autumn the first major shipments of Communist arms began arriving in Cuba.

#### Scope of Bloc Military Aid

From the autumn of 1960 until the late summer of 1961, bloc arms deliveries were made regularly to Cuban ports. No financial information on the bloc's arms deals with Cuba has been disclosed, but it is estimated that on the order of \$100,000,000 worth of equipment and technical services has been provided. In addition, large numbers of vehicles and other military-related items have been delivered, which contribute either directly or indirectly to Cuba's military potential. Moreover, several hundred Cuban military personnel have received training, including pilot training, in the bloc.

Because of the secrecy which has surrounded the Cuban military buildup, information on the exact quantities of bloc matériel is fragmentary. On 1 January 1961, during a military parade celebrating the second anniversary of Castro's take-over, Cuba unveiled an array of military hardware indicating a build-up. In that parade, Cuba equipped with medium and heavy tanks, assault guns, artillery, antiaircraft weapons, and mortars, as well as rifles and machine guns, were featured prominently. Since then, large additional amounts of land armaments have been supplied, along with MiG jet fighters and other equipment.

Since the end of August 1961, the focus of the bloc's military aid to Cuba has been on assimilation of new equipment, intensive training, and completion of the organization of Cuba's military establishments. Further military shipments to Cuba may include bombers, naval craft, and possibly short-ranged tactical guided missiles.

The capabilities of the Cuban ground forces have increased steadily after the refurbish of bloc equipment and training. In the autumn of 1960, estimates of the size of the ground forces range from 750 to 1000 thousand. All units are equipped with bloc small arms and many have heavier equipment.

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as well. This aid is strongly reflected in Cuban ground forces organization which resembles that of the best European armies.

Secret bloc arms aid has given the Cuban ground forces an armored, antiaircraft, antiaircraft, and antitank capability largely lacking in the past and unknown to other countries of the Caribbean area. Hundreds of bloc transports and planes have greatly increased the mobility of these forces. Thousands of miles of bloc road arms have been delivered, enhancing the regulars' guerrilla warfare capabilities and enabling Cuba to conduct major non-bloc wars for extensive operations in other countries. Secret bloc instructions have been issued for landing paratroops and they serve as full-time airborne to each individual unit. Under continuous bloc tutelage the combat effectiveness of the Cuban ground forces probably has increased when it survives what of course will be Latin American attempts to subdue, stop and to bring the Cuban regulars down a body of well-trained military cadre which ultimately will be used to lead or support Communist guerrilla actions to the rest of Latin America.

Some Chinese Communist weapons have been supplied to the Cuban ground forces but the extent of People's authority in the military aid field is unclear.

The capabilities of the Cuban air forces declined sharply following Castro's take-over as a result of purge and destruction of key personnel. One of the major goals of the new regime, however, was to acquire secret jet aircraft, and most of the Cuban military leaders closest to the bloc in the spring of 1960 were air experts. Their training has been one of the most important links of the Cuban military aid program. Cuban pilots have now returned to Cuba where they are continuing instruction in MiG jet fighters which arrived last summer. The bloc has also supplied technicians, training, jet trainers, and some simpler engine technicians. About a dozen MiG-19s, MiG-21s, MiG-23s, and MiG-25s have entered Cuban service for the Cuban National Air Force. There are some indications that Cuba may receive Soviet jet bombers, but these have been difficult to confirm.

The Cuban navy has not yet received any significant strategic naval ships, but naval combat vessels are being kept up to bloc standards. Gunboats, but no naval ships have been delivered. Although no large-scale training programs for Cuban naval personnel have been indicated, the USSR probably will provide some assistance to Cuba.

Some air and military equipment supplied to Cuba:

Type of Equipment	Estimated Value
MIG jet fighters	\$30-50
Medium and heavy transports	\$10-15
Antiaircraft guns	\$10-15
Field artillery	\$10-15
Antitank aircraft and tanks	\$10-15
Paratroopers	\$10-15
Guerrilla arms	\$10-15
Trucks and other vehicles	\$10-15

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January 10, 1962

Subject: Bloc Military Aid to the Castro Regime

For more than a year the Sino-Soviet Bloc has supplied the Castro regime with large scale military assistance. Bloc military deliveries -- primarily from the USSR and Czechoslovakia -- have included a wide assortment of land armaments ranging from small arms through heavy tanks. Bloc aircraft supplied to Cuba include MiG jet fighters, helicopters, transports, and trainers; jet bombers may also be provided. Extensive military training has been provided both in the Bloc and in Cuba. Communist military aid has turned the Cuban military establishment into one of the most formidable in Latin America, and it has introduced a military capability hitherto lacking in the Caribbean area.

The Soviet Union at first moved cautiously in responding to Cuban requests for military assistance, probably out of deference to the priority of maintaining a climate of negotiations at the Paris summit. Once underway, however, the Cuban buildup proceeded swiftly. Bloc support has aided the Castro regime in suppressing the [illegible] movement and in consolidating its control over the Cuban people while the work of converting the island into a base for Communist operations in the rest of Latin America is carried out.

To a considerable degree the Bloc has committed its prestige in the maintenance of the present regime and [illegible] probably will continue to provide military equipment and training to help uphold this commitment. For the past several months the bloc's military aid program in Cuba has been concerned primarily with training, assimilating new equipment, and remolding the Cuban military establishment along bloc organizational lines. New deliveries of arms are probably underway.

Background

Preliminary attempts to procure Soviet bloc arms were initiated by the Cuban government as early as 1959, but no firm military aid pacts were concluded until the summer of 1960. The USSR's cool response to Cuban gestures for cooperation in the military field was largely the result of Soviet uncertainty over the future [illegible] of Cuban [illegible]. As [illegible] efforts to procure military equipment in the West became increasingly difficult through 1959 and early 1960, Cuban purchasing missions traveled frequently to the bloc to investigate new sources of supply. Discussions reportedly covered a whole range of equipment from small arms to modern jet aircraft.

[Illegible] at the time of Mikoyan's trip to Cuba in February 1960, when the USSR abandoned its former [illegible] toward Cuba in favor of [illegible] propaganda support and extensive economic aid [illegible] appeared unwilling to move toward a major arms [illegible] Cuban desires. [5 lines illegible] Mikoyan's visit signalled the beginning of a massive bloc trade and aid program which gained momentum throughout the 1960's as U.S. - Cuban relations deteriorated.

With the collapse of the East-West summit meeting in May 1960 and the sharp setbacks in Soviet relations with the United States, many of the former Soviet inhibitions about providing military aid to Cuba were removed and a vigorous drive was launched to associate the bloc more closely with the Castro regime. This drive reached a peak with Soviet attacks on the Monroe Doctrine and assurances of support in the event of US military action against Cuba. These assurances -- including Khrushchev's ambiguous references to retaliation with missiles -- were offered in general terms intended to cover the supply of military aid in the form of equipment and technical assistance, without committing the USSR to specific moves in support of Cuba.

Military negotiations with the USSR and Czechoslovakia in 1960 were followed by a well publicized trip to Prague and Moscow by Raul Castro, which probably was the occasion for the conclusion of secret arms deals. By August, Czech small arms were being issued to some Cuban militia units, and in the autumn the first major shipments of Communist arms began arriving in Cuba.

#### Scope of Bloc Military Aid

From the autumn of 1960 until the late summer of 1961, bloc arms deliveries were made regularly to Cuban ports. No financial information on the bloc's arms deals with Cuba has been disclosed, but it is estimated that on the order of \$100,000,000 worth of equipment and technical services[?] has been provided. In addition, large numbers of vehicles and other military-related items have been delivered which contribute either directly or indirectly to Cuba's military potential. Moreover, several hundred Cuban military personnel have received training, including pilot training, in the bloc.

Because of the secrecy which has surrounded the Cuban military buildup, information on the exact quantities of bloc material is fragmentary. On 1 January 1961, during a military parade celebrating the second anniversary of Castro's takeover, Cuba unveiled an array of military hardware indicative of deliveries up to that time. Units equipped with medium and heavy tanks, assault guns, artillery, antiaircraft weapons, and mortars, as well as rifles and machine guns, were featured prominently. Since then, large additional amounts of land armaments have been supplied, along with MiG jet fighters and other equipment.

Since the end of August 1961, the focus of the bloc's military aid to Cuba has been on assimilation of new equipment, intensive training, and completion of the reorganization of Cuba's military establishment. Further military shipments to Cuba may include bombers, naval craft, and possibly short-ranged tactical guided missiles.

The capabilities of the Cuban ground forces have increased steadily since the introduction of bloc equipment and training in the autumn of 1960. Estimates of the size of the ground forces range from 250 to 400 thousand. All units are equipped with bloc small arms and many have heavier equipment

as well. Bloc aid is strongly reflected in Cuban's ground forces organization which resembles that of the East European satellites.

Soviet bloc arms aid has given the Cuban ground forces an armored, artillery, antiaircraft, and antitank capability largely lacking in the past and unknown to other countries of the Caribbean area. Hundreds of bloc transport vehicles have greatly increased the mobility of these [?] forces. Thousands of modern bloc small arms have been delivered, enhancing the regime's guerrilla warfare capabilities and assisting it to release older non-bloc weapons for subversive operations in other countries. Soviet bloc instructors have been used extensively for training purposes, and they serve as full-time advisors to some individual units. Under continuous bloc tutelage the combat effectiveness of the Cuban ground forces probably has risen to where it surpasses that of all other Latin American countries. In addition, bloc aid is helping the Castro regime develop a body of well-trained military cadres which ultimately could be used to lead or support Communist guerrilla actions in the rest of Latin America.

Some Chinese Communist weapons have been supplied to the Cuban ground forces but the extent of Peiping's activity in the military aid field is unclear.

The capabilities of the Cuban air forces declined sharply following Castro's takeover as a result of purges and defections of key personnel. One of the major goals of the new regime, however, was to acquire combat jet aircraft and most of the Cuban military trainees who went to the bloc in the summer of 1960 were air cadets. Their training has been one of the most important tasks of the bloc's military aid program. Cuban pilots have now returned to Cuba where they are continuing instruction on MiG jet fighters which arrived last summer. The bloc has also supplied helicopters, piston-engine trainers, and small single-engine transports. About a dozen IL-14 twin engine transports were delivered this autumn for the Cuban civil airline. There are some indications that Cuban may receive Soviet jet bombers, but none have been delivered so far.

The Cuban Navy has not yet received any significant bloc military assistance. [Illegible] Cuban vessels have been equipped with bloc antiaircraft guns, but no [illegible] ships have been delivered. Although no large scale training programs for Cuban naval personnel have been disclosed, the USSR secretly[?] will provide some vessels to Cuba.

#### Bloc arms and military equipment supplied to Cuba:

Type of Equipment	Estimated Quantity
MiG Jet Fighters	50-100
Medium and Heavy tanks	[illegible]
Assault guns	0-10
Field artillery	500-1000
Antiaircraft artillery	500-1000
Mortars	[illegible]
Small arms	200,000
Trucks and other vehicles	4,000